Department of Planning and Development
dpd
CAM
Client Assistance Memo
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Seattle Permits
— part of a multi-departmental City of Seattle series on getting a permit

Calculating Required Parking for Commercial Projects

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Seattle's Parking Policies

Minimum parking requirements for uses allowed in commercial areas are established in order to ensure nearby customer and employee parking, reduce congestion on adjacent streets, and minimize spillover parking into adjacent residential areas (per Section 23.12.070, Policy B of Seattle's Land Use Code). These requirements are set to discourage underused parking facilities, which may mean tolerating occasional spillover parking.

In order to encourage pedestrian activity and a variety of services in commercial areas through the maintenance and development of small commercial uses, minimum accessory parking requirements may be waived subject to conditions in the Land Use Code.

Using the Land Use Code to Determine Your Parking Requirement

The number of parking spaces required for most uses is found in Section 23.54.015. The requirements for commercial (non-residential) uses are generally shown as one parking space for a certain number of square feet (i.e., one space per 350 sq.ft. of use). However, some requirements are based on such aspects as number of fixed seats, staff members, or the size of assembly areas. If you cannot find your specific use in the chart, a DPD Land Use staff member will help you find the most comparable use and determine the correct amount of parking required for your project.

Counting Accessory Uses

People often ask how to count portions of their space that are used differently than the primary use. Accessory uses are considered part of the principal use for purposes of calculating parking requirements. For example, the Land Use Code classifies a sales area in a newspaper printing plant, a cafeteria in an office building, and a storage room in a retail store as part of the principal use for purposes of calculating parking requirements. (See Director's Rule 23-86.)

Calculating Your Minimum Parking Requirement

Unless otherwise noted in Chart A of Section 23.54.015, the minimum number of required off-street parking spaces is based on gross floor area. Gross floor area is defined as "the number of square feet of total floor area bounded by the inside surface of the exterior wall of the structure as measured at the floor line," including all areas such as mechanical housing and common access for the building (see Director's Rule 24-86).

If your business comprises only a portion of a structure, or part of one floor, you would figure your square footage from the center of any interior wall(s). In this case, include a percentage of the shared or common areas in the same proportion as your use is to the total gross floor area of the building or floor.

The gross floor area, divided by the number of square feet per parking space as shown in Chart A (i.e., one space per 350 sq. ft. of use), would be the minimum required parking. If your figure results in a fraction, anything up to and including ½ of the unit of measurement (one parking space) may be disregarded and fractions over ½ must be "rounded up" to the next full unit, as demonstrated below:

5.23 = 5 spaces
5.51 = 6 spaces
5.50 = 5 spaces
5.90 = 6 spaces

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Waivers, reductions and exceptions to this minimum are described in this CAM. Also, commercial projects in Midrise and Highrise zones may not be required to include any parking (see 23.54.015E and 23.45.110, Land Use Code); and, for certain uses in some zones, parking for bicycles may be required (check to see if the use fits the profile in 23.54.015I3). Note that the Northgate Overlay District applies different parking ratios for certain commercial uses (see 23.71.016A).

Waivers

In all zones, no parking is required for the first 2,500 square feet of gross floor area of most nonresidential uses. (Fast food restaurants, motion picture theatres, administrative offices and institutional uses do not get the waiver, nor do medical services uses in the Northgate Overlay District.)

Except for pedestrian-designated zones, if a use shares a structure with other types of uses, the waiver is prorated based on the area occupied by each eligible use (see Director's Rule 22-86).

Once the waiver, or portion of waiver, has been subtracted from the gross square feet used for your minimum required parking calculation above, recalculate the number of parking spaces you must provide (see attached worksheet).

Parking Quantity Exceptions

Parking quantity exceptions are set forth in 23.54.020. They apply in all zones except Downtown and Major Institution zones, which are regulated by 23.49.016 and 23.54.016, respectively.

Exceptions are available for Landmark Structures, for expansion of existing nonresidential uses in Commercial zones and in the Seattle Cascade Mixed (SCM) zone, and for pedestrian-designated commercial zones. Because these are very specific, please carefully read subsections C, D and E of 23.54.020 if your project falls into one of these designations. Also look at the following sections for further information: 23.47.044 for pedestrian-designated, or "P" (P1 or P2), zones and 23.48.032E for SCM zones.

Reductions to Minimum Parking Requirements for Nonresidential Uses

A broader category of exceptions, in 23.54.020F, may be applied to a variety of commercial projects, except in the Northgate Overlay District. Note that these reductions are in addition to the 2,500 square foot waiver and they are calculated on the gross floor area of a use after the waiver is subtracted. The total, or combined, reduction to required parking from the following categories is limited. There are usually limitations within each reduction option as well.

For every exception, always refer to the Land Use Code for details on what will qualify, how to calculate reductions, and restrictions for each use or combination of uses.

- **Transit Reduction** allows a reduction of 15-20 percent, depending on the zone, for a use located within 800 feet of a street with peak (in industrial zones) or midday (in all other zones) transit service headways of 15 minutes or less in both directions. (See Director's Rule 13-86 and 23.54.020F2.)

- **Substitution of Alternate Transportation** allows reductions up to 40% for new or expanding administrative offices or manufacturing uses that require 40 or more parking spaces. Alternative transportation programs include (a) certified carpool spaces, (b) vanpools, (c) transit or transportation passes, and (d) covered bicycle parking spaces. (See 23.54.020F3.)

- **Shared Parking** allows reductions for two or more uses that are from different categories of uses, or between uses with different hours of operation. A use must be located within 800 feet of the parking to qualify for shared parking, and cannot have already received a reduction for cooperative parking. (See 23.54.020G.)

- **Cooperative Parking** allows a reduction of 10% to 20%, depending upon the number of cooperating separate business establishments. This reduction is permitted only for parking that is located within 800 feet of the business and in a Commercial, Residential-Commercial or SCM zone; and for business establishments that have not received a reduction for shared parking. (See 23.54.020H.)

NOTE: Both "shared" and "cooperative" parking require a substantial commitment from the parties involved to ensure that required parking located on a different lot remains available for customers or employees of the use requiring the parking. Any parking agreement should endure for as long as the use requiring the parking. Also note that reduction to parking must be determined as a percentage of the minimum parking requirement after any reductions permitted through earlier exceptions in 23.54.020.

Parking Deficits

A parking deficit occurs when a legally established use does not provide the number of parking spaces that would be required by code for that use today. For example, the use may have been established before there was a parking requirement, or at a time when fewer spaces were required. In any case, when a use within an existing building that has a parking deficit is changed to a different use requiring more parking, "credit" is given to the existing use for the number of parking spaces required now.

In other words, the new use does not trigger a requirement to "make up" the deficit. So, the existing deficit can be carried over when the use changes. However, if the building is demolished, then the "credit" no longer exists.

Just as you do when calculating new parking, be sure to deduct the 2,500 square foot waiver (if applicable) before giving the deficit credit. Subtract the deficit spaces from those required for the new use to find the number of spaces actually required. Only the additional spaces for the new use must be provided in addition to maintaining any existing spaces.

For example, if an existing use that would require 10 spaces, but has none, changes to a use that requires 15 spaces, then five spaces must be provided. If an existing use requires 10 spaces and two are provided and it is changed to a use that requires 15 spaces then a total of seven spaces must be provided.

It is important to note that once required spaces have been provided for a use, they may not be removed if the use is later changed to one that requires fewer, but still more than the original deficit credit of 10 parking spaces. The legal deficit may be used to reduce parking one time only. (See Director's Rule 22-86.)

Examples and Worksheets

Pages 4-5 provide a moderately complicated parking calculation example for a mixed use building with transit and shared parking reductions, along with a worksheet. **Please show parking calculations as applicable to <u>your</u> project using this format.**

Questions?

If you have questions about parking requirements and calculations, please call (206) 684-8850 or send your question to us via our online "Land Use Question & Answer Service" at **www.seattle.gov/dpd/LandUse.**

Access to Information

Links to electronic versions of DPD **Client Assistance Memos (CAMs), Director's Rules**, and the **Seattle Municipal Code** are available on the "Publications" and "Codes" pages of our website at **www.seattle.gov/dpd.** Paper copies of these documents are available from our Public Resource Center, located on the 20th floor of Seattle Municipal Tower at 700 Fifth Ave. in downtown Seattle, (206) 684-8467.

EXAMPLE: Calculating Parking Quantity

This example describes how to calculate required parking quantity for a mixed use building (retail and two types of office uses). Please note that this particular project includes parking reductions due to transit use and shared parking.

STEP 1. List types of uses in the building and their square footage.

RETAIL:	16,452 SF
OFFICE:	
Customer service	36,184 SF
Administrative	18, 401 SF
TOTAL:	71,037 SF

STEP 2. Determine eligibility for waiver.

Eligibility for 2,500 SF waiver (see CAM text for explanation and code reference). Retail and customer service office are eligible. Administrative offices are not eligible.

STEP 3. Calculate required parking with waiver where allowed.

a. Add together eligible spaces and determine percentage of each: 16,452 *plus* 36,184=52,636

Retail: 16,452 *divided by* 52,636 = 31.256%
Cust serv: 36,184 *divided by* 52,636 = 68.743%

b. Calculate required parking using base floor area per each space from Chart A, Section 23.54.015:

Retail (waiver allowed)**:** 16,452 SF *minus* 781.4 SF (31.256% of 2,500 SF) =15,671 SF *divided by* 350 SF per space = 44.77

Cust serv (waiver allowed)**:** 36,184 *minus* 1718.59 SF (68.74% of 2,500 SF)=34,465 SF *divided by* 350 SF per space = 98.47

Admin office (no waiver allowed)**:** 18,401 SF *minus* 0 =18,401 SF *divided by* 1,000 SF per space = 18.40

c. **SUBTOTAL** of required parking spaces = 161.64

STEP 4. Determine and calculate additional parking reductions.

a. **Transit** (SMC 23.54.020F2) 15% reduction on total # of spaces (Step 3): 161.64 spaces x .15 = 24.25

b. **Shared parking** of 20% on retail space (SMC 23.54.020G2b): 44.77 spaces x .20 = 8.95

c. **TOTAL** of reduced # of spaces for transit and shared parking(sum of a & b): 24.25 *plus* 8.95 = 33.20

TOTAL REQUIRED PARKING SPACES: 161.64 *minus* 33.20 = 128.44
ACTUAL PROPOSED PARKING: (7 spaces more than required) = 135

WORKSHEET: Calculating Parking Quantity

Please use this worksheet to calculate parking quantity. Refer to the example at left and explanations within the text of this CAM to complete the steps below.

STEP 1. List types of uses in the building and their square footage:

STEP 2. Determine eligibility

STEP 3. Calculate required parking with waiver where allowed

a. Add together eligible spaces and determine percentage of each:

b. Calculate required parking with waiver where allowed:

c. **SUBTOTAL** of required parking spaces

STEP 4. Determine and calculate additional parking reductions

SUM of reduced # parking spaces:

SUBTOTAL (Step 3 above) *minus* **REDUCTION:**

TOTAL REQUIRED PARKING SPACES:

ACTUAL PROPOSED PARKING:

EXAMPLE: Calculating Parking Stall Size

This example describes how to calculate what size parking spaces are required for a mixed use building (retail and two types of office uses).

STEP 1. Calculate minimum and maximum number of stalls by size, based on actual proposed parking spaces calculated above. (Percentage of required stall sizes listed below are per SMC 23.54.030B2c.) These requirements vary depending on the number of spaces being provided. Be sure to check SMC 23.54.030B2c each time you calculate parking for a project.

35% minimum small: .35 x 135 = 47.25 (47)

35% minimum large: .35 x 135 = 47.25 (47)

Total number of spaces required: 47 + 47 = 94

The remainder of required spaces can be any size, except that no more than 65% of the total may be the small size. In this example:

.65 x 135 = 87.75 (88) maximum small size

STEP 2. List # of proposed stalls per size category that meets requirements in Step 1.

60 small (47 required)

50 large (47 required, including 5 barrier-free*; first one must be van accessible)

25 medium (balance ok to be medium)

135 total

*You may include required barrier-free spaces in the "large parking space" category.

WORKSHEET: Calculating Parking Stall Size

Please use this worksheet to calculate parking stall size. Refer to the example at left and explanations within the text of this CAM to complete the steps below.

STEP 1. Calculate minimum and maximum number of stalls by size, based on actual proposed parking spaces calculated above. (Percentage of required stall sizes are per SMC 23.54.030B2c.)

STEP 2. List proposed stalls per size category that meet requirements in Step 1.